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CHAPTER V

THE RHYTHMS OF THE SOCIAL LIFE

En outre, ni l'individu, ni la société, ne sont indépendants de la nature, de l'univers, lequel est lui aussi soumis à des rythmes qui ont leur contre-coup sur la vie humaine. Dans l'univers aussi, il y a des étapes et des moments de passage, des marches en avant et des stades d'arrêt relatif, de suspension [Arnold Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, p. 4].

In Tepoztlán, as in other simple societies, the pulse of life is measured more directly than it is with us by the great clocks of the sky. Life everywhere is not a sustained adjustment, but a series of crises and lyses, an alternation of tension and release. The movement of this rhythm is set in the first instance by astronomical recurrences. The rotation of the earth, the revolution of the earth around the sun, even the waxing and waning of the moon, constitute the metronome of human interests. Upon these cadences of nature the simpler peoples are more directly dependent. Elsewhere artificial heat and light, and the interchange of products of different climates, go far toward making one hour, or day, or month, like another. But, while in Tepoztlán the clock in the tower of the Palacio Municipal strikes the hours, the sound of its bell reaches the ears of a small number of the inhabitants, and all are far more attentive to the chronometers of sunset and sunrise, and of wet season and dry.

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805 For this reason one hour of daylight is as good as another, and it does not matter at precisely what time a thing is done. An "appointment" is too sharp a concept for a people moving with the more deliberate cycles of the stars. "It will take place right now, at about three or five o'clock," a Tepoztecan may say shortly after noon. On the other hand, because the rhythms of the group activity change almost completely with the changes of the season, the months within the year are individual, unique, each with its appropriate festivals, to be anticipated and at last enjoyed. The next year again repeats the sequence and the cadence of the last. Only the irregular occurrence of war breaks up the rhythm of the years and brings about a longer cycle of activity: a slow crescendo of restoration, of anabolism, after sudden catastrophe.

462 512 The daily rhythm of the Tepoztlán man, as contrasted with that of the woman, is more dependent upon the alternation of night and day. Chiefly he works in the fields, or in other outdoor activities (as *arriero*, for example, transporting goods from the railroad to the storekeepers in Tepoztlán), where nightfall ends his labors. A comparatively small number of individuals, those employed in the municipal government, perhaps the storekeepers and a few others, follow a daily schedule dependent upon clocks and watches, and pursue much the same activity throughout the year. But most of the men leave the fields only when the day is over during the busy

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and spices, as well as candles, alcohol, and kerosene, are rarely bought in quantities; the supply is replenished almost every day. The storekeepers make up little screws of salt and of sugar, to meet the customary demand of purchases worth one or a few *centavos*. Coming to the stores, and especially to the bi-weekly market, the women from all parts of the village meet to enjoy gossip and the satisfying ritual of bargaining for a price. This is a social opportunity confined to the women; a man may make an occasional personal purchase, but never buy the household supplies.

Between the short rhythm of the day and the long rhythm of the year falls the intermediate cycle of the week. Although in places a subdivision of the lunation, this period is everywhere more artificial than the others. In Tepoztlán the week has resulted from an adjustment of the Aztec market days to the European calendar, and from the introduction of the Christian Sabbath. Each of the eighteen Aztec "months" of twenty days was divided into quarters; on every fifth day adult men were required to attend the market (*tianquiztli*). These market days were also celebrated by games and festivals; they were a sort of compulsory holiday. Such regulations merely placed a legal sanction on a system of exchange of goods among the Aztec communities which had grown up to bind hundreds of Indian *pueblos* into economic interdependence.

No doubt the system of alternating market days in the valleys of northern Morelos preserves substantial-

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ly the pre-Columbian economic pattern. Only now the market days fall on days of the European week rather than on fixed days in the Aztec *tonalamatl.* In Tepoztlán, markets are held on Wednesday and Sunday. Larger towns have daily markets, with special days for more important gatherings. In Cuernavaca, these days are Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday; in Cuautla, Friday is an important day; in Yautepec, one such day is Monday. Thus those who live by trade can make the rounds of the markets. A vendor of pottery in Tepoztlán on Wednesday goes regularly to Cuernavaca on Thursday. There he buys more pottery to sell on Friday in Cuautla. On Saturday he is back in Cuernavaca, where he buys fruit. On Sunday or Monday he is in Toluca where he sells his fruit and buys Toluca pottery. This he offers on Tuesday in Cuernavaca, and on Wednesday he is again selling Cuernavaca pottery and what is left of his Toluca ware in Tepoztlán.

Mexican towns are essentially markets; characteristically the only industry is household industry, and agriculture usually accomplishes little more than the support of the community. Everywhere the *plaza* dominates the town; the only large buildings are there; it is the center of social life. Even in unimportant towns like Tepoztlán the two market days break the week into two periods of lull separated by two days of special interest and attention. On these days the Tepoztecans come to the *plaza* to exchange not only goods but information. Besides the regular

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177 *tos* cause them to live near the *plaza* and so keep out
369 *los tontos*, and also because people continue to occupy the house sites of their ancestors. By spotting the
177 traits on a map of the community the distribution of
369 city traits as compared with folk traits could be indicated. An example of such a distribution is given
463 on the accompanying map. Here are contrasted the
361 distributions of two sorts of professionals. Each letter indicates the home (except in a few cases this is also the place of business) of an individual with a recognized specialty. On the one hand are those specialists —tradespeople and artisans—who practice European techniques and who mostly acquired their specialties through economic competition. These are in general found near the *plaza*. On the other hand are the midwives, herb doctors, and fireworks-makers, who practice more ancient, traditional techniques and who in more cases came into their rôles by birth. These tend to be found toward the periphery.

[621] The upper three *barrios*, San Pedro, Los Reyes, and San Sebastian (and, to a somewhat less extent, Santa Cruz), are the most remote from the *plaza* and are *barrios* of *tontos*. These three contain the greatest proportionate number of magical specialists and not a single rational specialist of the sorts listed. The peo-
177 ple in these *barrios* have a different "mentality" from
369 those that dwell around the *plaza*. Racially they are
621 no different, but the experiences they undergo are
[805] different. They are "timeless" for one thing; few up there have watches, and they are too far away to hear

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the clock on the *plaza*. Illiteracy is greater up there. The mailcarrier in the months of these observations never delivered a letter to one of these three *barrios*.

These statements, and those that follow, need of course the support of a more substantial body of materials and more careful exploration into the facts. They are made merely to define a problem for further work. In this sense it may be stated that the distributions of various aspects of city ways rather strikingly coincide. Those elements of material culture which were more recently taken over from the city and are still exterior to the Spanish-Indian folk culture, such as forks, felt hats, and metal beds, are to be found in the inner zone of *los correctos*. Here also is most marked the tendency toward secularization of holiday celebration. It is *los correctos* who promote the carnival, with its strongly secularized, commercialized aspect; while it is *los tontos* who control the religious *fiestas*, with their greater detail of ritual and remoteness from commercial activity. The three most important *fiestas* commemorating *santos* occur respectively in San Pedro, San Sebastian, and Ixcatepec, on the peripheries of the community. It is *los tontos* who preserve the most traditional ritual on practical occasions of crisis, such as birth or death. One might venture to guess that the nearer a birth occurs to the central *plaza* the less the proportion of merely ritualistic, expressive behavior and the greater the proportion of purely practical behavior which attends the occasion.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

In any one year, school enrollment is highest in the first and second grades and successively lower in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. As each class is promoted, the number of pupils declines. 871

For example, if we follow the class of 1941 from the second grade we find the following drop in enrollment:

Year	*Grade*	*Enrollment*		*Total*
		Boys	*Girls*	
1941	Second	82	57	139
1942	Third	53	26	79
1943	Fourth	—	—	—
1944	Fifth	31	19	50
1945	Sixth	21	14	35

Between the second and third grade, the drop in enrollment was over 40 per cent. Although the average decline is less than that, it is high enough to reflect the negative attitude of parents toward education. The ability to read and write on a simple level satisfies the standards of most mothers and fathers.

Despite this widespread attitude, total school enrollment has increased steadily. There has been an increase of more than 50 per cent in school attendance between 1941 and 1948. In 1941, approximately 49 per cent of the children between age six and fifteen were enrolled in school. A greater proportion of boys (56 per cent) of this age group than girls (41 per cent) went to school. In the other six years for which we have figures, the enrollment of girls is consistently less than boys in each age group.

According to the teaching staff of the central school (see Fig. 56), the most serious problem is attendance. Absence from school is extremely high during all the important fiestas and in the months of June and July, when there is a great deal of work in the fields. Truancy among boys in the third and fourth grades is also high. Only a minority of the parents feel obligated to give school priority over such activities as helping at home or in the field, and this minority is generally in the middle economic group. The wealthy, who own many animals, and the poor, who "have nothing," depend more upon their children's labor. The school staff is helpless in putting pressure on those parents who keep their children home from school, and must depend upon the local officials whose policy it is to do nothing to incur the anger of the voters unnecessarily. 872 [646]

Tardiness is also a serious problem since parents, in general, are not time conscious, and often keep a child at home until he has completed his chores. This situation has been met by ringing the church bell each morning and afternoon, and by arranging a competition for punctuality among the classes. [805]

In the kindergarten and first grade, the fearfulness and crying of the children are problems. Each year, at the beginning of the term, five to eight children cry chronically and must be sent home. The first-grade teacher observed that the children who had attended kindergarten before entering her class showed much 872 866